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OEA

SERVICE DATE – JANUARY 23, 2015

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
WASHINGTON, DC 20423**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Docket No. AB 1122X

**Ouachita Railroad, Inc. – Abandonment and Discontinuance Exemption –
in Union County, Arkansas, and Union Parish, Louisiana**

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, Ouachita Railroad, Inc. (Ouachita) filed a notice of exemption under 49 C.F.R. § 1152.50 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. § 10903 in connection with the abandonment and discontinuance of service of a line of railroad in Union County, Arkansas, and Union Parish, Louisiana. The rail line proposed for abandonment extends 13.4 miles from milepost 112, approximately 4.7 miles north of the Louisiana/Arkansas border near Junction City, Arkansas, and milepost 125.4 approximately 8.7 miles south of the Louisiana/Arkansas border near Lillie, Louisiana (the Line). A map depicting the line in relationship to the area served is appended to this Environmental Assessment (EA). If the notice becomes effective, the railroad will be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances and to dispose of the right-of-way.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Ouachita submitted an Environmental Report that concludes that the quality of the human environment will not be affected significantly as a result of the abandonment or any post-abandonment activities, including salvage and disposition of the right-of-way. Ouachita served the Environmental Report on a number of appropriate federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Surface Transportation Board's (Board) environmental rules [49 C.F.R. § 1105.7(b)].¹ The Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) has reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

¹ The Environmental and Historic Reports are available for viewing on the Board's website at www.stb.dot.gov by going to "E-Library," selecting "Filings," and then conducting a search for AB 1122X.

Diversion of Traffic

According to Ouachita, no local traffic has moved over the line for at least two years and all overhead traffic was rerouted years ago. Accordingly, the proposed abandonment would not adversely impact the development, use and transportation of energy resources or recyclable commodities; transportation of ozone-depleting materials; or result in the diversion of rail traffic to truck traffic that could result in significant impacts to air quality or the local transportation network.

Salvage Activities

According to Ouachita, abandonment of the Line would result in the removal of the rail, crossties, and possibly the upper layer of ballast. The Line crosses multiple streams and rivers, including Little Coney Bayou, Turkey Creek, and Beaver Creek, via wooden trestle bridges less than ten feet in height, according to Ouachita. Ouachita does not intend to disturb bridges or sub grade structures and plans to conduct salvage activities using the existing right-of-way and public and private road crossings for access. No new access roads are contemplated. According to Ouachita, salvage activities would not cause sedimentation or erosion of the soil, and Ouachita does not anticipate any dredging or use of fill when removing the track material. Ouachita states that no debris would be discarded along the right-of-way and any work along the right-of-way would be subject to appropriate measures to prevent or control spills from fuels, lubricants or any other pollutant materials.

The line does, however, pass through a 100-year floodplain. Accordingly, we have included the appropriate offices of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Emergency Management Agency on the service list for this proceeding so they receive a copy of this Environmental Assessment for their review and comment. To ensure that the 100-year floodplain is not adversely affected, the railroad shall consult with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development and the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission prior to commencement of any salvage activities regarding potential impacts to the floodplain and shall comply with the reasonable requirements of these offices.

According to Ouachita, the rail corridor is a remnant of the main line of the Chicago, Rock Island, & Pacific Railroad Company that formerly stretched from Little Rock, Arkansas to Eunice, Louisiana. The Line traverses rural portions of southern Arkansas and northern Louisiana, just east of the main business district of Junction City, Arkansas. Neither Union County nor Union Parish is in a designated coastal zone.

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) identified 13 geodetic survey marks within the project area. In response, OEA recommends a condition be imposed that that Ouachita shall consult with NGS and notify NGS at least 90 days prior to beginning salvage activities that will disturb or destroy any geodetic station markers.



FEMA

FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
REGION VI
MITIGATION DIVISION

NOTICE REVIEW/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTATION

☐ We have no comments to offer. ☒ We offer the following comments:

WE WOULD REQUEST THAT THE COMMUNITIES' FLOODPLAIN ADMINISTRATORS BE CONTACTED FOR THE REVIEW AND POSSIBLE PERMIT REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS PROJECT. IF FEDERALLY FUNDED, WE WOULD REQUEST PROJECT TO BE IN COMPLIANCE WITH EO11988 & EO 11990.

REVIEWER:

Mayra G. Diaz
Floodplain Management and Insurance Branch
Mitigation Division
(940) 898-5541

DATE: February 6, 2015

